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PP RUEHPA
DE RUEHOS #0690/01 2951345
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
P 221345Z OCT 07
FM AMCONSUL LAGOS
TO RUEHZK/ECOWAS COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUEHUJA/AMEMBASSY ABUJA PRIORITY 9277
RUEHNY/AMEMBASSY OSLO PRIORITY 0137
RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 9506
INFO RUFOADA/JAC MOLESWORTH AFB UK
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC
RUCPDOG/DEPT OF COMMERCE WASHDC
RHEBAAA/DEPT OF ENERGY WASHINGTON DC
RUEATRS/DEPT OF TREASURY WASHDC
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHINGTON DC
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 LAGOS 000690

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/18/2017
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [ASEC](#) [PHUM](#) [NI](#)
SUBJECT: MOSOP PRESIDENT: EFCC MUST CHARGE CORRUPT
GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS

Classified By: Acting Consul General Vicki Hutchinson for reasons 1.4 (B) and (D)

¶1. (C) Summary: The relative calm in Port Harcourt, Rivers State is misleading as state government officials have contributed to the violence, rather than decreased it. The Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) must hold government officials responsible for corruption and complicity in criminal activities, our contacts warned, to prevent this trend from continuing. While our contacts do not expect democratic results from the December local government elections, they viewed positively Vice President Goodluck Jonathan's request to discuss the Ogoni perspective on the Niger Delta. End Summary.

¶2. (SBU) On a September 28-29 visit to Lagos, Theodore Craig, Adviser on West African Affairs, Office of Policy and Planning, U.S. Department of State, met with Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People (MOSOP) President Ledum Mitee, and Chris Newsome with the NGO Stakeholder's Democracy Network (SDN).

JTF Worsens Security; Government Complicit in Criminality

¶3. (C) MOSOP President Mitee told Craig and Poloff the military Joint Task Force (JTF) presence in the Niger Delta has lowered the level of security in the region, not raised it as intended. While there is relative calm in Port Harcourt, Rivers State, NGO activist Chris Newsome warned a "meltdown" has been temporarily arrested, not prevented. He averred that the August violence was a delayed reaction to the flawed 2003 and 2007 elections (Ref A). Since political "patronage went up, not down," the GON was limited in questioning state level activities, Mitee said. Under this system, former Rivers State Governor Peter Odili and others were able to arm youths for political gain with impunity. These individuals eventually turned to oil bunkering and/or criminal activities operating through cults (gangs with animist religious overtones). Mitee was angered government officials knew which criminals were responsible for the violence in Port Harcourt, but did not act against them.

EFCC Must Hold Corrupt Governors Accountable

14. (C) The Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) must hold corrupt governors accountable for their actions, including former Delta State governor James Ibori and former Rivers State governor Peter Odili. This is the only way the new administration can prove its dedication to improving Nigeria, Newsome commented. He urged the USG to investigate assets held by wealthy former Nigerian governors in the United States, as the United Kingdom has done. Newsome speculated that if Odili were arrested there would be "dancing in the streets of Port Harcourt" and a strong message would be sent to current officials.

15. (C) Mitee said the Attorney General and Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) are engaged in a struggle which is detracting from the pursuit of criminals. Mitee criticized the fact that only a court order or injunction is now needed to prevent the EFCC from pursuing an investigation of an allegedly corrupt governor.

Rivers: Pervasive Corruption Continues

16. (C) Mitee warned the USG from getting too close to the Rivers State government because corruption there is endemic, he claimed. For example, Odili's former Commissioner of Finance told Mitee that the State Security Service (SSS) facilitated ransom payments to kidnappers, funneling them through the account of the SSS Director, helping rather than arresting the kidnappers. Mitee recounted how Port Harcourt gang leader Soboma George, at the time wanted by the police, gave the Rivers State Chief of Police's wife a brand new sports utility vehicle for her birthday.

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17. (C) Mitee said he received credible evidence that JTF actions and recent security maneuvers in Rivers State have forced criminal and militant groups in Port Harcourt into closer partnership. The groups have aligned to prevent being used against one another. Security interventions will not fix security problems in the region, our interlocutors suggested. The recruitment of 14 and 15 year olds, each paid naira 50,000 (approximately USD 400) to join militant and criminal camps has begun to resemble the holiday jobs students take up when school is out. Mitee blamed government for not providing employment opportunities; the lack of such opportunities, he claimed, has driven youths to seek this alternative "employment."

Local Government Elections: Expect Thugs

18. (C) Newsome said Rivers State is heading towards a democratic disaster during the local government elections. He predicted the "thuggiest of the thugs" would be "selected" in the December local government elections." Mitee said Yar'Adua's electoral reform efforts are not all-inclusive and that those who approve the effort are scrambling to find a spokesperson. The party primaries did not occur in late September as they were supposed to. Instead, the People's Democratic Party (PDP) Chairman simply wrote down the names of people he chose, Mitee and Newsome said. The Secretary to the State Government in Rivers, Gabriel Pidomson, a known cult member from Ogoniland, told aspiring politicians they must join cults (particularly his Viking cult) if they want to join politics, according to Mitee. Mitee applauded a Rivers State PDP National Assembly member who complained openly that the state's electoral commission was composed solely of PDP members. Mitee doubted current Rivers Governor Celestine Omehia would forsake corruption. The Governor built a million naira home that he has tried to write-off as a shopping mall.

19. (C) Mitee said local government administration reform

needs to be a long-term goal for Nigeria. The Vice President told Mitee that political will to reform extends down through state government but stops at the local government level. Given difficulties with local government, Mitee recommended funds should be given as development grants rather than shared between community members.

Niger Deltans Appreciate VP Jonathan
But He Needs More Power For Success

¶10. (C) Secretary to the Government of the Federation, Babagana Kingibe, is trying to marginalize Vice President Goodluck Jonathan, Mitee reported. The Vice President is able to acquire support and authority only by appeasing others, he claimed. While Jonathan is not known to be as corrupt as Odili, his former Chief of Staff was known to be "dirty," and Jonathan's reputation is tainted by association.

That said, Mitee was hopeful Jonathan would continue to listen to Niger Deltans and was grateful to be invited to discuss ways forward in the Niger Delta with Jonathan on September 27.

¶11. (U) Theodore Craig did not clear this cable before departing post.
HUTCHINSON